

Nature vs Nurture

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Summary: The UNSC insignia slipped off the screen and was replaced by a blue ship that in no way resembled any Hood had ever seen before. The streamlined hull and curved fins screamed "alien" or at least more alien than he was used to dealing with...

Nature vs Nurture

I got this idea after reading 'the Gentle Giants of Ganymede' and watching the Halo 3 trailer right afterwards. It also didn't help that I went to work an hour later and stared at the wall for five hours!(I hate watching Self-Scan)

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Title: Nature vs. Nurture

One-shot

Location: Earth Defense Platform Cairo, in the year 2552

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"Uhâ€|Sir?"

Admiral Hood looked up from a recent report he received detailing how mop-up was going down near New Mombasa. Apparently some Grunts were still hiding in parts of the city. The rest of the Covenant forces that had managed to land on Earth had only been too willing to throw themselves on the human's guns.

"Yes, Lieutenant?"

"The long-range surveillance radar is picking up a ship heading this way, sir. It isn't human or Covenant."

Hood frowned and glanced briefly at the small screen in front of him then at the far larger screen at the front of the command center. He could feel the curious glances of the other personnel in the room. Nothing much had really happened since the Prophet of Regret fled for who-knows-where followed by the In Amber Clad. Most were anxious for something to happen that would break the monotony of what essentially came down to guard duty.

"Put it on the main screen."

"Yes, sir."

The UNSC insignia slipped off the screen and was replaced by a blue wire-frame ship that in no way resembled any design Hood had ever seen before. The sleek, streamlined hull and gracefully curved fins screamed 'alien' or at least more alien than he was used to dealing with. No Covenant vessel was that delicate and wasn't even worth comparing it to the blocky ships that composed most of the UNSC fleets.

Then again that strange ship could be a new Covenant design. It wouldn't take too much to alter their ship's usual curves into something similar to this new one. The fins would be an odd addition but maybe they stole the idea from some other race like they did with all the rest of their technology. It was a bit of a stretch but more plausible in Hood's eyes than some new race, capable of space flight, showing up on humanity's doorstep.

A communications officer suddenly spoke up.

"We're receiving a transmission from the alien vessel, sir. Do you want me to put it through?"

Hood blinked in surprise and instinctively gave him the okay. He didn't know what he was expecting to see but the face that popped up in the upper right corner of the screen certainly was not even remotely close. It was an alien alright, but not one of the known Covenant races. The elongated skull and protruding lower face might have resembled an Elite's except that it didn't have four mandibles, but what humans might call a 'normal' mouth. Also, judging by the size of the equipment visible behind the creature, it was massive. Certainly much larger than the average human. In fact it was around the same size as an Eliteâ€|

Hood recovered from the shock in time to catch the creature's opening statement.

"Good Afternoon-"

All that the alien said after that was completely ignored by the humans in Cairo Station's command center. Not only was the alien speaking English but he was doing so with a very distinctive American accent. And it wasn't moving its mouth. It also didn't help that it was apparently spouting pleasantries, not death threats or religious mumbo-jumbo. After a long period of staring in complete silence Hood realized that the alien was done with its speech and was waiting for

a response. He scrambled for something to say for a few more awkward seconds thenâ€¦

"What the _hell_!"

â€|he was pre-empted by one of the officers sitting a few levels behind him.

"I see the language hasn't changed all that much after all these years." The alien said with a tinge of amusement in its voice.

It still didn't move its mouth. At about that moment logic kicked in and Hood felt like banging his head on the console in front of him. Instead, to preserve his dignity, he resorted to mentally kicking himself. Hard. The alien wasn't moving its mouth because it wasn't speaking. It had some sort of artificial intelligence doing the talking for it, presumably because it couldn't speak the English. In some convoluted way that probably explained the accent too. Hood wasn't sure about that, but he's an Admiral, not a scientist/linguist/who-ever-the-hell-knows-this-kind-of-crap-ist so it wasn't his problem.

All Hood knew was that this alien, who looked suspiciously like an Elite (never mind the mandible problem), was approaching Earth in a strange ship that could possibly be a new Covenant vessel.

His first instinct was to blow the thing out of the sky. Hood opened his mouth to give the orders to fire the MAC gunsâ€|and paused. Despite everything, these aliens (for he had no doubt there were more of them then just the one he was speaking to) were rather polite and hadn't actually done anythingâ€|yet. After a brief second of contemplation he decided give them a chance to leave intact.

"Whoever you are, leave the system Sol immediately. If you do not comply we will fire upon you."

There was a pause, in which Hood guessed that the alien AI was translating, then the alien creature contorted its face into an expression that the Admiral assumed was surprise. Or maybe anger. He wasn't an expert on alien facial expressions either. After a few brief beats of silence the alien decided to plead its case and began speaking in a deep guttural tongue. The AI promptly began translating.

"You once called us brothers and welcomed us onto your planet when we thought ours was destroyed and all hope was lost. Your scientists returned hope to us when it was discovered amongst the ancient Lunarian texts that our race perhaps migrated to the distant Giant's Star. We left you and your warmth and hospitality to confirm with our own eyes that the rest to the Ganymean lived amongst the far off stars. We are now returning from our quest triumphant in the knowledge that our people survived and found another home exactly where you Earthmen predicted it would be. We are fulfilling the promise that we made so long ago that we would return when our journey was over and once again our two races could become one. I am ver-"

"I see we need a countdown for you 'Ganymean'. You have one minute to get into Slipspace," Hood glanced over at the officer manning the

weapons console and, more importantly, the hologram of the stations AI next to him. "Warm up the MAC guns."

"Aye, sir."

"Admiral Hood, Fleet Admiral Harper is sending five cruisers to engage the-", the comm. officer hesitated. "The 'Ganymean', sir."

Hood looked back up at the screen and what he assumed was a panicking 'Ganymean'. Obviously the AI had been translating for it. It attempted to speak again but Hood cut it off.

"I advise you leave. Now."

The 'Ganymean' opened its mouth again in yet another attempt to convince the humans that it meant no harm, but Admiral Hood would have none of it.

"Lieutenant, cut off all communications with the 'Ganymean'."

"Yes, sir."

The image of the strange alien blinked out of existence, leaving an unobstructed view of the sleek alien vessel.

"MAC guns at ninety percent, sir." Cairo's AI cut in.

Hood nodded. "If they're not out of here in thirty seconds, fire."

"Aye, sir."

The image on the screen pulled out to show the entire Solar System with a zoom lens on the wire-frame alien ship and Harpers rapidly approaching cruisers. Everyone in the command center watched in anticipation as the Fleet Admiral's ships closed in and the Ganymean vessel slowly turned around.

"Holy!" the radar operator exclainer as the Ganymean ship seemed to stretch across the screen then abruptly vanished. "That was no jump into the Slipstream! It was moving so fast that the radar couldn't keep up with it!"

Hood looked at the officer in surprise then turned a thoughtful gaze on the now empty screenâ€|well â€|empty of the Ganymean at least. This might be something that the UNSC would have to look into. Hood abruptly shook his head. Speculations could be saved for later. Right now he had a report to write.

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Garuth turned his back on the now fuzzy grey screen that had, until seconds before, been occupied by the image of the bridge of what he assumed was a human ship. Apparently five hundred years had changed much. He didn't remember the Earthmen being that hostile. Sure he remembered that they were inclined towards aggressiveness and had destroyed Minerva because of it, but that was five-hundred _thousand_ years before. That particular trait had a long time to dilute itself.

Garuth looked at Shilohin. "What was that about nature fixing and restoring the balance in the Earthmen?" Sarcasm and amusement laced his tone.

Shilohin gave the Ganymean equivalent to a shrug. "Maybe they had more wars and the aggressive trait was one of the ones necessary for survival." Seeing Garuth wasn't convinced she abruptly switched tactics.

"If you would remember that ship that they launched at us when they saw us for the first time? I believe that it was to be used as a make-shift weapon. The only difference between now and then is that now they have real weapons mounted on their ships. This is sure to make them more confident and less likely to try to make contact like they did before."

Garuth nodded thoughtfully. "Perhaps we should try again?"

Shilohin quickly shook her head. "No! That would not be wise at this time. We should wait until their aggressive streak really does die down. Five hundred years is not very long on the cosmic time-scale. They need time to cool down and realize that they will destroy themselves if they persist towards violence, like the Lunarians did five-hundred thousand years ago."

"Yes," Garuth finally agreed. "We will approach them again when they disarm themselves."

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Ehâ€|that wasn't nearly as amusing as it was in my headâ€|

Anyways people who have read Hogan's 'The Gentle Giants of Ganymede' and played Halo 2 (like I even need to askâ€|) will notice that I took someâ€| liberties concerning some aspects of the stories. I hope that it didn't detract from the fic too much.

Constructive criticism is welcome.

End
file.